



900 EAST MAIN STREET  
RICHMOND, VA 23219

# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

*Air Force Association  
American Ex-Prisoners  
of War  
American Legion  
AMVETS  
Association of the United  
States Army  
Disabled American  
Veterans  
Fleet Reserve  
Association  
Korean War Veterans  
Association  
Legion of Valor of the  
U.S., Inc.  
Marine Corps League  
Military Order of the  
Purple Heart  
Military Officers  
Association of America  
Military Order of the  
World Wars  
National Association for  
Uniformed Services  
Navy Seabee Veterans of  
America  
Non-Commissioned  
Officers Association  
Paralyzed Veterans of  
America  
Reserve Officers  
Association  
Roanoke Valley Veterans  
Council  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Vietnam Veterans of  
America  
Virginia National Guard  
Association  
Women Marines  
Association*

Adopted  
July 11, 2012

## 2013 Position Paper Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program

1. **Objective:** To ensure that students attending a Virginia public college or university as part of the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) have the resources necessary to pursue their education.
2. **Background:**
  - The VMSDEP, formally known as the War Orphans Education Program, provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became at least 90 percent disabled as a result of military service in an armed conflict.
  - Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, the Virginia National Guard, or the Virginia National Guard Reserves. Armed conflict includes military operations against terrorism or as the result of a terrorist act, a peace-keeping mission, or any armed conflict after December 6, 1941.
  - Under VMSDEP, tuition and required fees are waived.
  - Students may also receive a stipend – currently capped at \$1,500 per year – toward room, board, books, and supplies. The amount of the stipend is dependent on the amount of annual state funding for the program (currently \$1,250,000 per year), the number of enrolled students, and enrollment status.
  - Benefits are available for up to four years or the equivalent.
  - The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) reports that the cost of room, board, books, and supplies increased \$1,590 between 2007-08 and 2011-12 – from \$7,839 to \$9,429. This represents a 20% increase.
  - During this same period, the number of students using VMSDEP benefits rose from 696 to 994, a 43% increase.
3. **Discussion:**
  - An increase in the stipend cap from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year would account for past increases in the cost of room, board, books, and supplies, as well as for allowing for increases expected in the 2013-14 and future school years.
  - The number of VMSDEP students is expected to continue to rise.
  - An increase of \$600,000 (GF) per fiscal year would provide adequate resources to cover both past and expected near-term growth in program costs.
4. **Recommendation:** That the Governor and General Assembly increase the per-student annual stipend cap to \$2,000, and appropriate an additional \$600,000 (GF) per year for the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program.